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THE EQUIVALENT OF A WARLORD

by

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Leaders are often described in terms of the amount of power which they hold. They are categorized as weak, moderately strong, strong, or extremely powerful. Dawson and Dawson in Democratic Government in Canada follow this tradition and conclude their analysis of the Office of the Premier by commenting on the power held by premiers. They state that

> (a) premier backed by a majority, unhampered by as many conflicting interests as the federal prime minister must consider is an immensely powerful figure: the genteel Canadian equivalent of a warlord.[1]

Premier Lougheed best exemplifies a leader with a substantial majority and a rather homogeneous population. The question is whether Premier Lougheed can also be described as the genteel Canadian equivalent of a warlord. An answer to this question can be arrived at by studying warlords and comparing Premier Lougheed to the composite image of a warlord.

A warlord is defined as a military commander and the term refers especially to war generals of ancient China's civil war period and Kaiser Willhelm II of Germany. The warring period of ancient China was from 403 to 221 B.C. During this time the seven states

of civilized China were constantly attempting to expand. They were frequently at war.[2] Oligarchy was the form of government, the ruling elite had control over the course of events. This is not to say that the traditional leaders of China were the major players of politics. In fact, during this time, power shifted from aristocratic families to the rapidly expanding bureaucracy.[3] The chiefs of the bureaucracy were the warlords. It was they who directed the life and death struggles of the state.[4]

The Chinese warlords strove to build up private armies of political and military clients in order to compete for territory on behalf of their states.[5] Governing and warring were the main purposes of a warlord's life. Warlords of large states concerned themselves at all times with maintaining their prestige among the states while the lords of small states were constantly struggling to remain independent. Successful warlords believed, as did Tzu-ch'an, warlord of Ching, that

> (government) is like the work of husbandry. You must think of it day and night, thinking of what is to be done first, and how the end

> is to be accomplished. Then labour at it morning and evening; but in what you do, do not go beyond what you have thought over; ...(in) this way you will commit few errors. [6]

Chinese warlords were able to gain the whole-hearted support of their people and unify them.[7] This unification was achieved by either of two methods. The lords who were war mongers unified the people by convincing them that their state was threatened by the ambitions of another state or states. The less materialistic rulers gained the respect of the citizens by first allying themselves with other states and proving their worthiness in foreign courts.

Warlords were cunning diplomats whose survival depended upon their ability to properly assess the exact balance of power among the states.[8] Spying was the means by which they obtained knowledge of internal conditions of other states. They depended also upon their reputations as able leaders. It was essential that a warlord show himself to be strong. If a warlord did not have the respect of his fellow lords, they would decide that his state was no longer fit to be independent and that it should be conquered by a stronger ruler of a stronger state.[9]

Four ministers of the warring states period serve as examples of what Chinese warlords were like. Lord Menchang inherited his title by right of being the only able son of a warlord.[10] He ruled by means of a complex system of alliances, plots, and counterplots and encouraged his clients to compete for his favor. Menchang was quick to anger and slaughtered those who mocked him.

Lord Flatbush was renowned for respecting all men of honour and for his willingness to sacrifice all luxury for the sake of a war campaign.[11] Unfortunately, he did not possess the honourable values of those he admired and allowed his personal greed to instigate a disastrous, long campaign. His state lost more that 400,000 men and nearly surrendered its capital. He was removed from power and died in shame.[12]

Lord Trust Tumulus was a kind, humble, courteous man who treated his citizens as his equals.[13] He was also a crafty statesman and would use thievery and treachery to win campaigns. His own clients and friends were loyal. Many of them killed themselves in accordance with ancient Chinese traditions so that Lord Tumulus might have luck in his battles.

Lord Cunshen was a very successful diplomatic warlord. His belief was that it is always easy to start something but not always possible to carry it through.[14] He ruled by discerning the thoughts of his enemies and constantly outwitting them. Lord Cunshen talked his state out of war and managed to remain independent.

The warlords of ancient China were all powerful. They answered neither to the people nor to the traditional rulers. The lords determined the goals of the states and directed the actions of their people in order that these goals would be attained. They were shrewd, proud geniuses of military strategy whose primary ambition was to build the power and prestige of their states and households.

Kaiser Willhelm II of Germany became emperor and supreme warlord by divine right in 1888. The Kaiser had acquired a militaristic attitude at an early age. He began intensive military training when he was nine. His grandfather, the Kaiser, supported young Willhelm's military enthusiasm by telling stories of past wars and glories.[15] Willhelm spent eight years as a lieutenant in the army and was then assigned to service

in the foreign office under Bismark. He idolized Bismark as the founder of the Reich and shared the general's belief that military matters must be given priority among the affairs of the state.[16]

As Kaiser, Willhelm II saw himself as being responsible to God for his people and his family. He accepted direction from God alone. He never took account of the opinions of his advisors, nor his subjects, nor his family. Willhelm II sought always to dominate conversation to the end that his own ideas would become the consensus.[18] He often stated that "(there) is only one law, and that is my law."[19]

The Kaiser was excessively proud of himself and his royal ancestors. He frequently addressed both the public and the army. His speeches were lengthy and dealt exclusively with the glory of the German race and his role as great expander of the Reich.[20]

Willhelm II was firstly a soldier and in public always wore the uniform of a Prussian officer. The army was Willhelm's personal pride and he granted it privileged position within the state. Most Germans sought to be affiliated in some way with the army so as to avoid the stigma of being civilian.[21] In

twenty-five years of peacetime rule, Kaiser Willhelm II added twenty-five corps to the military might of his country. He built an army which could fight on two fronts at the same time.

The Kaiser of Germany had, as Supreme warlord, complete authority over the army and the navy. Willhelm II, despite his love of the military, chose not to assume the responsililities of Chief of General Staff when World War One broke out, and refrained from interfering in military matters throughout the war.[22] He was very much afraid of failure and did not risk making decisions on military operations, for he knew virtually nothing about them.[23]

Kaiser Willhelm II inspired the Germans with his vision of the all-powerful, magnificent German state and built a strong army so that his country would be protected and able to expand.[24] World War One shattered Willhelm's illusion and his disenchanted, war-weary citizens exiled him from his throne and his country. Kaiser Willhelm II as a warlord was excessively militaristic and thought of himself as a hero who would expand the glorious German Reich. Like the

Chinese warlords, he was autocratic and totally devoted to the affairs of the state. He had the power to send his people into war in order to achieve his own ambitions.

Premier Lougheed is similar to the Chinese warlords and Kaiser Willhelm II in several ways. He, as leader of the government, directs, aided by cabinet ministers, the affairs of the province. To what extent the Premier's ideas are implemented by cabinet members is debatable, given that cabinet meetings are closed and that there exists a tradition of cabinet solidarity. However, it is apparent that the influence of the Premier is strong.

Alberta's Premier must show leadership ability if he hopes to maintain his power and prestige with the people, his fellow premiers, and the federal government. Fortunately, the consequences of not being strong are much less severe than they were for warlords. The Chinese warlords who proved weak were often killed, their states conquered. Kaiser Willhelm II was exiled from his throne and homeland. Premier Lougheed, if he proved weak, would merely lose his seat in the Legislative Assembly and cease to

represent the people of Alberta.

At present, Premier Lougheed seems to enjoy immense popular support. This support was gained by one of the methods used by Chinese warlords and Kaiser Willhelm II. The Premier rallied Albertans by proclaiming that they were threatened by the ambitions of non-Albertans (the federal government), and by promising to protect their interests.

Kaiser Willhelm II spoke often and at great length to the people of Germany. Premier Lougheed frequently addresses Albertans. His speeches are long and remind the people that their province is prosperous, that it is a wonderful place, and that they can all be proud of Alberta's glory.

The final similarity between a warlord and Premier Lougheed is that both gain political strength from complex systems of alliances both within and outside their states. Premier Lougheed attempts to safeguard the interests of certain groups within Alberta and in turn he receives the political support of these groups. He allies himself with the western premiers against the federal government on certain

issues. It is certain that the Premier also attempts to make business contracts on behalf of Alberta outside the province and outside the country. Even though the nature and scope of Premier Lougheed's network is difficult for any but those close to him to discern, it does exist and is vital to him as leader even as it was important for the warlords.

Premier Lougheed differs significantly from warlords in three ways. Warlords ruled in oligarchies. Premier Lougheed is the leader of a democratically elected parliament in which each member has equal contribution to the decisions make by the House. The Legislative Assembly, not the Premier, is the supreme authority. This House represents the will of the people and each member must answer for his actions and inactions once every four years in a general election. The Premier is responsible to his constituents and also to all Albertans. The warlords answered to no one.

The term warlord implies a military commander. Premier Lougheed does not have an army. He has never served in the armed forces. He certainly does not have the power to plunge Albertans into violent war.

Alberta's Premier differs also in that the leadership is not the only purpose of his life. He is a lawyer and has stated repeatedly that he does not intend to remain in political office forever. He has other aspirations. Warlords were totally devoted to increasing their prestige and expanding their state. Premier Lougheed does not appear to share their goals nor their zeal.

In answer to the original question, that is, is it accurate to describe Premier Lougheed as the genteel Canadian equivalent of a warlord, one is inclined to say no. The similarities between the Premier and a warlord are striking but not as significant as the differences. Premier Lougheed does have great power, but this power is restrained by a democratic system of government. The Premier is not able to do what warlords, even genteel lords, were able to do, that is, make war. He is not a leader for all time. It is apparent that the description of Dawson and Dawson is original, but it is also somewhat exaggerated.

F O O T N O T E S

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3. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

4. Sima Quian, Warlords (Edinburgh: Southside, 1974) p. 30.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

6. Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

10. Sima Quian, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 88, 91.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

15. Joachim Von Kurenberg, The Kaiser, (London: Cassell and Company, 1954) p. 10.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 123, 126.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 230, 232-233.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 254.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*, p. 352.

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